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PEROT ACTIVISM IN 1992
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

A Thesis

Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Government
The College of William & Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Jonathan Kajeckas


1996

APPROVAL SHEET

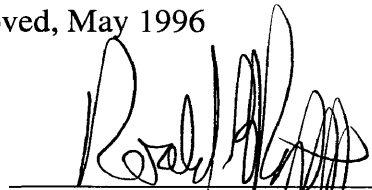
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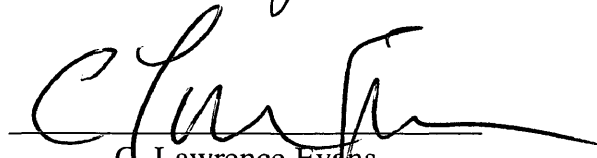
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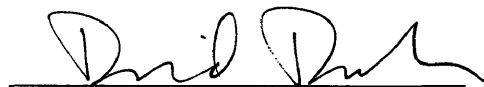
Master of Arts


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DEDICATION

For Anne

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ABSTRACT

H. Ross Perot's 19% showing in the 1992 presidential election was made possible by a large group of volunteers, comprising Democrats and Republicans as well as Independents. Of these, the most active were Independents, while Republicans were more active than Democrats. This Republican Perot activism was motivated by dissatisfaction with the economy's performance and, to a lesser extent, a gap between the issue positions of these activists and the Republican party.

PEROT ACTIVISM IN 1992
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

INTRODUCTION

In the 1992 presidential campaign H. Ross Perot garnered 19% of the popular vote, the strongest showing for a third-party candidate since ex-president Theodore Roosevelt's 1924 run. Perot owed his electoral strength to a huge campaign war chest, inventive use of media, and an army of volunteer campaign workers who answered phones, collected ballot petition signatures, canvassed door to door, attended fund raisers and rallies, spoke to the news media, and tried to convince their friends to support Perot. Overnight, activists emerged to support a candidate with no existing campaign infrastructure, no party organization, and no endorsements by major political figures. Who were these people?

Many of them were independents, whose numbers reflected the often-observed decline of party identification. Perot appealed successfully to this natural constituency of citizens disinclined to support the major party candidates. Independents showed the highest level of campaign activity for Perot. Some were Democrats, willing to support a candidate outside their party. The rest were Republicans, willing not only to support a candidate outside their party, but to work against the sitting Republican president, George Bush. These Republicans were even more active than their Democratic counterparts on Perot's campaign.

Why were Republicans more active for Perot than Democrats? Did their defection from party ranks represent disaffection for the party, or for the nominee? Was this disaffection based on attitudinal factors such as ideology or issues, or on some other factor? What does this behavior imply for their future party identification and electoral behavior?

How will this in turn affect the major parties and their ability to elect their nominees?

The answers to these questions have electoral consequences for the Republican party in the years to come. Perot focused his attack on the status quo, which at the time included a Republican president. His campaign attracted more Republican volunteers than Democrats, and these Republicans were in turn more active on the campaign than Democrats. If Perot's appeal to Republicans was based on antipathy toward Bush, Bush's defeat in 1992 should allow those Republicans who defected from their party to return and support future Republican candidates. On the other hand, if Republicans supported Perot in preference to their party nominee in 1992 because they felt out of place in the party, they could remain open to appeals in the future for votes and political activity outside the party. Perot pulled votes about equally from Clinton and Bush, and therefore did not cost the Republican party the election. But by drawing more heavily on Republican rather than Democratic activists, Perot's presence robbed the Republican party of potential volunteer support and organizing activity. The prospect of losing this group of voters and activists in future elections should cause concern to Republican strategists.

In this paper I argue that the key to Perot's appeal among Republicans was the alienation these activists felt from their party and their party nominee on specific issues and, most importantly, on their perceptions of the economy. Republicans felt that the national economy had done poorly, and they judged Perot as better able to handle economic problems than Bush. In addition, the judgment that Bush would do poorly in the election and that Perot would have a strong showing motivated Republican activity for Perot. The implication of these findings is that Republican Perot activists will be open to appeals from outside the party in the future.

This paper has five sections. Section I summarizes previous studies and findings. Section II describes the primary sample used in the analysis. Section III outlines theoretical approaches to understanding the phenomenon of defection from party. Section IV presents data on causes of Perot activism. Section V lists conclusions.

SECTION I. PREVIOUS STUDIES

Previous studies of third-party candidates have emphasized the role of alienation as a key factor contributing to third-party strength (Mazmanian 1984; Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus 1984; Smallwood 1983; Gillespie 1993). A main line of argument clusters around issues which divide the electorate. Thus Mazmanian (1978, p.312) argues that

the emergence of significant third parties depends on the coincidence of four factors: severe national conflict over a few very important issues...; division of the electorate into at least one intense estranged minority and a broad majority; rejection or avoidance of the position of the minority by both major parties, causing alienation of the minority; and a politician or political group willing to exploit the situation by initiating a new party.

In particular, according to Mazmanian, economic issues have the ability to polarize segments of society sensitive to the business cycle, but such parties lose their appeal as the major parties address economic concerns and regain the support of the disenfranchised. More significant third party movements, such as the American Independent Party of George Wallace, derive their appeal from more persistent societal cleavages, such as race relations and the Vietnam war.

Similarly Rosenstone et al. argue that the success of third parties is attributable to the unresponsiveness of the major parties, particularly on economic issues.

“Major party failure is the primary force motivating third party voting in America. When the two major parties deteriorate – when they neglect the concerns of significant blocs of voters, mismanage the economy, or nominate unqualified candidates – voters turn to a third party alternative. Prominent third party challengers... also prompt citizens to abandon the major parties.” (1984, p.181)

Smallwood (1983, p.278) isolates a similar set of factors: “conditions of political

crisis; high levels of public dissatisfaction with the major parties; and the prominence and visibility of third-party nominees.”

As Smallwood notes, dissatisfaction with the major parties has been rising since the 1960s, raising concerns that the electorate has entered a period of “dealignment” as proposed by Ladd (1982). Party loyalties have weakened, leaving a large proportion of the electorate “up for grabs.” This weakening of party loyalties is documented by Wattenberg (1990), although Wattenberg takes heart at his finding that voters are increasingly neutral toward parties, rather than specifically negative. Another view on partisan realignment is offered by Paul Allen Beck’s “socialization theory of partisan realignment” (1974). Beck suggests that a generation of voters who were ripe for realignment would either realign or would, upon reaching their thirtieth birthday, become unavailable for political mobilization, “contributing to an increasingly severe decline of party.”

Most of the work on third parties has focused on explaining third party vote rather than activism. The most notable exception is Canfield’s (1984) study of Wallace activism in Wayne County, Michigan. Proclaiming that “there’s not a dime’s worth of difference between the Democratic and Republican parties” and offering voters “a choice, not an echo,” George Wallace’s independent campaign in 1968 attracted activists whom, according to Canfield, fell into the two groups of racial reactionary and ultraconservative. These activists agreed with Wallace and found little difference between the two major parties on the issues of interest to them, but much difference between the major parties and the American Independent Party. Compared to Wallace voters, Wallace activists were more concerned with an internal Communist threat, reflecting less trust in the political system.

Important differences existed between the two main subgroups of Wallace supporters.

Racial reactionaries were responding to urban violence and the civil rights movement, while ultraconservatives sought a return to pre-New Deal domestic and foreign policy. Canfield concluded that ideological disputes between these two groups over social welfare policy issues such as Medicare and Social Security (both of which were favored by the racial reactionary and opposed by the ultraconservative), coupled with organizational and other squabbles, splintered the coalition built around Wallace, effectively dooming its electoral prospects after 1968.

Was Perot's showing in 1992 a sign of impending realignment of existing voters away from political parties or towards one of the major parties? Or did he mobilize vast numbers of previously inactive citizens? In either case, did the 1992 Perot activists have enough goals and ideas in common to remain a force in American politics, or are they likely to move into one of the major parties as Wallace supporters did?

SECTION II. DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE

The data used in this thesis were collected from a random sample of callers to Perot's 800 number in Dallas who were entered into a national database during the spring and summer of 1992. By the time Perot dropped out of the race in July, this database included nearly 500,000 callers. A sample of 2,000 names was drawn from this base, of which 1,901 were usable addresses. Not all of the callers became involved in the Perot campaign, and not all voted for Perot. Rapoport and Stone sent mail questionnaires to these 1,901 callers in September of 1992. Of this group, 1,334 sent back completed questionnaires, a response rate of 70%. Immediately after the 1992 election these respondents were mailed a follow-up survey, returned by 944 individuals (a response rate of 71% of the first wave respondents). Both surveys included questions about demographics, party affiliation, prior political activity, other campaign involvement, attitudes about parties, candidates, and governmental institutions, and activism for Perot.

Activism for the Perot/Stockdale ticket during the general election (after the party conventions) was measured in this sample with a battery of questions in the post-election survey asking respondents to report activities they had performed. The activities were: collecting signatures for a ballot petition, contributing \$100 or less, contributing more than \$100, telephoning or door to door canvassing, trying to convince friends to support the ticket, attending a fundraiser, and attending a public meeting or rally. Activities were then counted to form a scale ranging from zero to six.

Overall, 57.1% of the sample engaged in some activity for the Perot/Stockdale

ticket in the general election, compared to the slightly lower 53.1% which voted for it. When broken down by party affiliation, independents were most likely to engage in some Perot activity (70.7%), followed by Republicans (61.6%), and Democrats (44.5%). It is striking that 17% more Republicans engaged in Perot activity than Democrats, suggesting that the Perot ticket held greater appeal for Republicans than for Democrats. The same pattern for the prevalence of activity also holds for the amount of activity, as shown by Figure 1, which shows the mean number of Perot activities by party identification: independents showed the highest number of activities, followed by Republicans, then Democrats.

SECTION III: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Causes of Perot Activism: Push and Pull

The two main types of factors which influence the decision to be active for Perot or any candidate can be classed under the headings of "push" and "pull;" that is, a potential activist may choose to support a given candidate because she dislikes the other candidates (she is "pushed" away from them) or because she is attracted to a candidate on some relevant dimension (she is "pulled" toward the candidate) (Rapoport and Stone, 1993). In many cases, we can expect some combination of "push" and "pull" to have influenced a given activist's choice to support a given candidate. This is particularly the case for third-party candidates, given that most of the population (and even more activists) identify themselves as members of one of the two major parties, from which we can assume a predisposition toward the candidates of their respective parties. In explaining defections from the two major parties, it is possible that both Democrats and Republicans were predominantly pushed away from their parties, that both were pulled to a third party candidate, or some other permutation (for example, that Democrats were pushed and Republicans pulled). In order to separate push from pull, what needs to be evaluated is the role that alienation (from candidate, party, or some other target) played in the decisions of individuals of different parties to engage in activity on behalf of Perot, relative to any attraction they might have to Perot on this or some other dimension.

Strategic Implications of a Three-Way Race

In any given race, we can expect that voters are both pushed and pulled, and the

process can be thought of as sequential. In order to overcome the predisposition to support the party with which they identify, a voter or activist must be significantly alienated from his party. By itself, however, alienation does not produce activism, since an alienated voter or activist might simply sit out a campaign in which he disapproves of his party nominee. If, on the other hand, an activist both disapproves of his party nominee and is attracted to another candidate, he has the opportunity to be active for that other candidate.

Party identification can be seen as having two behavioral implications. The first is a predisposition to support the candidates of a particular party. In addition, party identification represents a predisposition not to support candidates from the opposition party, since this would be seen as inconsistent with being a member of the party.

In a two-candidate election, the net effect of push and pull are identical, and may be thought of as one phenomenon; for example, a Democratic voter who defects and votes for a Republican may have experienced only push away from the Democrat, or only pull toward the Republican, or both. Whatever path his decision took, the only alternative to voting his party identification is voting for the opposition party.

This calculus is more complicated, however, for an activist looking at a three-candidate election in which two candidates are the nominees of the major parties and one candidate is an independent.¹ For example, a Democrat who dislikes the Democratic nominee but is not prepared to support a Republican can abide by his party identification in part by supporting the independent candidate. Thus we can conceive of his choice on whom to support as a choice between the options of his party nominee and the independent candidate,

¹The candidacy of John Anderson in 1980, for instance, received a boost from voters dissatisfied with the major party candidates (Rosenstone et al., 1984).

rather than the usual choice between his party nominee and the opposition party nominee. An independent candidate offers the opportunity for public activism and political involvement without requiring as complete a defection from his party. Particularly for an individual who feels internally efficacious and concerned about political issues, activism for an independent candidate would be preferable to abstaining from activism or voting.

People who identify themselves as 'pure' independents indicate no preference for one major party over the other. Because such citizens are likely to hold the parties in low esteem, we may view their choice of non-partisanship as a predisposition to refrain from supporting the candidates of either major party. We would therefore expect independents to be very open to appeals by the independent candidate, since by so doing they avoid supporting either major party. Their choice of activism or vote may thus be seen as a choice between the independent candidate and the major party candidate to which they feel closest.

Constraints on Third Parties

In choosing to discard the nominees of their parties, Democrats and Republicans must overcome their usual predisposition to support these nominees. Rosenstone claims that the third party vote is a path of last resort, that voters consider such a move only after they have disposed of the major party candidates (1984). This historical failure of third parties to draw large percentages of votes may be explained by a number of factors which Rosenstone identifies, such as the extreme issue positions of third parties and the negligible chance of their electoral success, barriers to ballot access and low campaign funding, as well as the first-past-the-post system, and attitudinal constraints such as loyalty to the major parties and low name recognition of third party candidates. In the 1992 election many of these barriers

were removed or surmounted by the Perot campaign, making support for H. Ross Perot a more palatable alternative for disaffected partisans than support for the opposition party.

Another hurdle often faced by third party candidates is name recognition. It is for this reason that Rosenstone et al. find that only “nationally prestigious” third-party candidates do as well as Perot did. Within certain groups, such as the veterans and business communities, Perot was fairly well known before his campaign began. In addition to his well-publicized mission to rescue captive employees in Iran, generous media attention in the early days of the campaign, much of it free, gave Perot national name recognition. This media coverage has a self-reinforcing aspect: little-known candidates cannot get coverage to become viable precisely because they are little-known. Candidates judged to be front-runners, on the other hand, benefit from a disproportionate amount of coverage, much of it favorable (Bartels, 1988). Perot’s candidacy was lifted by early favorable press coverage, including coverage of the efforts of volunteers to put him on the ballot after his invitation to them on the *Larry King Live!* show in February. Such coverage helped his standing in the polls before the national party conventions, at a time when the major party candidates were still securing their nominations in order to run against each other. In polls of three-way matchups against Bush and Clinton, Perot drew 16% in late March, 25% in May, and 37% in early June leading Bush and Clinton with 24% each (Lichter and Noyes, 1995). High poll numbers early in the campaign reinforced his image as a serious contender.

Most third-party campaigns lack money. The major party nominees, once they get to the general election, do not. Indeed, the law which guarantees matching funds to candidates over a certain threshold has been called a “major party protection act” (Rosenstone et al., p.26), since it rewards parties which already have a broad base of contributors. By pledging

to spend \$60 million of his own money on his campaign, Perot swiftly disposed of any concerns that his campaign would be underfunded and therefore doomed to failure. Perot's "wallet on the table" gave the campaign instant viability, simultaneously offering potential activists an opportunity to work on a well-funded campaign and removing the necessity for fund-raising, which normally takes up a substantial portion of campaign resources. In interviews of Perot campaign organizers in Virginia conducted by Spang, Perot's financial independence was cited "by every former official as *the* key factor for his initial support" (Spang, 1994).

The Perot campaign also benefited from numerous court cases brought by previous third-party candidates challenging restrictive ballot access laws, including George Wallace in 1968, Eugene McCarthy in 1976 (who filed 18 suits), and John Anderson in 1980 (who successfully challenged electoral laws in 10 states) (Rosenstone et al., 1984). The Perot campaign gained access to the ballot through petition signatures, rather than through party primaries, but the effect of a successful petition drive was similar. The campaign publicly announced when they would be submitting the petition signatures so as to maximize media coverage, and this coverage in turn promoted Perot's candidacy. Despite the outpouring of support Perot experienced in some areas, the Perot campaign had considerable difficulty in putting Perot on the ballot in all fifty states. Because petition laws vary across states, requiring filings on different dates, a considerable amount of organization was required to coordinate the petition drives. Much of this effort was staffed by volunteers with little experience in politics or management, and they were hindered as much as helped by methods of organization dictated by Dallas headquarters (Spang, 1994). The difficulty of the petition undertaking is evidenced by the fact that even the well-financed Perot campaign did not

know until very close to the election whether Perot would be on the ballot in all the states.

The only third-party candidate who captured more of the popular vote in a presidential election was Teddy Roosevelt, and Perot's candidacy had some striking similarities to Roosevelt's. More than any other third-party ticket, Roosevelt's Bull Moose Progressive party was centered around one candidate, rather than an established party ideology or set of issues. As Rosenstone puts it, "Every previous third party run began with a party, which in turn selected a nominee. But in 1912 Roosevelt was the party. Had he not run, it is unlikely there would have been a Progressive challenge that year" (Rosenstone et al., 1984). Just as Roosevelt's candidacy was the reason for the Progressive Party's existence, so too was Perot's candidacy the spark for the formation of a campaign apparatus which became United We Stand, America following the election.

An important way that Perot's campaign differed from Roosevelt's was that Perot did not even attempt to form a party for his 1992 run. Perot ran as an independent candidate, not on a United We Stand ticket, and there were no other candidates backed by United We Stand in 1992 other than Perot and his running mate James Stockdale. United We Stand until late 1995 was officially an educational organization whose tax-exempt status prohibits it from endorsing candidates for office; this effectively prevented it from becoming a political party, barring major organizational change.² By contrast, 14 candidates were elected to the House of Representatives on a Progressive Party ticket in 1912, although the party decayed soon

²Although it was widely interpreted that the group had endorsed Kay Bailey Hutchison in the Texas special election to replace Lloyd Bentsen, Perot's announcement in June of 1993 (three days before a runoff between Hutchison and appointee Bob Krueger) was that the state United We Stand chapter had been polled and that 84% supported Hutchison. Perot later gave personal endorsements to other candidates.

thereafter and disbanded completely when Roosevelt declined its nomination for president in 1916. In this respect Perot's campaign more closely resembles other independent candidacies in the latter half of this century, notably those of George Wallace in 1968, Eugene McCarthy in 1976, and John Anderson in 1980 (Beck and Sorauf 1992).

Far from disabling him, Perot's independence from all political parties worked to his advantage. Because he was not hindered by the usual obstacles of third party politics, he was able to market himself not only to voters in search of a change from the incumbent administration, but also to those disaffected with the major party candidates or with party politics generally.

In the Section IV, I analyze possible sources of alienation from political parties, focusing mainly on explanations of why Republicans defected from Bush to Perot. I analyze three traditional factors relating to party: ideology, issues, and economic performance. In each case I compare Republicans to Democrats and independents, and attempt to determine whether the differences between these groups on measures of alienation account for observed differences in Perot activism.

TABLE 1

Percent agreeing

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Independents</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
get rid of parties	32.6%	57.1%	27.5%
parties confuse issues	71.0	89.6	72.6
N	324	182	379
Source: Perot sample data			

SECTION IV: PEROT SAMPLE DATA

Parties and Party System

The potential Perot activists in the sample generally held both parties in low esteem. Only 64.1% of those identifying themselves as Democrats rated their party average or better; the rest rated it below average or poor. More predictably, these Democrats rated the Republican party very negatively, with only 12.1% rating it average or better. Among independents, 30.5% rated the Democratic party average or better, while fully 49.8% gave it the lowest rating of “poor.” The Republican party fared worse; only 17.3% of independents rated it average or better, while 58.5% rated it poor. Republicans identifiers rated the Democratic party average or better in 15.2% of the cases, with 54.1% rating it poor; 53.7% rated their own party average or better, with the rest, nearly half, rating it below average or poor. For all three party groupings, the mean evaluation score for both parties is negative.

Two other questions asked attitudes on the party system generally, and not a specific party. Respondents were asked whether they agreed that government would work more efficiently if we could get rid of parties altogether, and whether parties confuse issues more than offer a clear choice between them. The most negative answers toward the party system came, not surprisingly, from independents, but even among partisans almost a third supported the radical step of getting rid of parties.

These figures serve to illustrate the anti-party feelings present in the sample and raise the question: what were the sources of alienation from the parties? Was dissatisfaction focused on the candidates, issues, or ideology?

Party Ideology

At a more specific level, individuals might feel that their own party is out of step with them ideologically, that it is too liberal or too conservative for their tastes.³ Because parties in the United States do not espouse specific ideologies separate from their presidential nominees, it would be surprising if respondents were to characterize their dissatisfaction with parties in terms of ideology. In order to test whether ideological alienation from the parties correlates with activism for Perot, I calculated a variable giving perceived ideological distance from one's own party for Democrats and Republicans, and from the nearer of the two parties for independents.

The absolute value of the difference between the respondent's own ideology and the perceived ideology of the party yields a subjective measure of distance between the respondent's ideology and his or her party's ideology. In keeping with the idea that citizens evaluate opportunities for activism in a three-way race first as a choice between their party and the independent candidate, the difference between the distances to the party and Perot are computed for partisan identifiers; independents are assumed to be predisposed toward Perot activism ahead of activism for the major parties. This yields a score ranging from zero to six which measures the respondent's agreement with his party's ideology on an issue, relative to his agreement with Perot. For example, a Democrat who identifies herself as very conservative (a score of 7), perceives the Democratic party as very liberal (a score of 1), and Perot as fairly conservative (a score of 6) is six units away from the Democratic party and one unit away from Perot; subtracting one from six yields a score of five in agreement with

³"Ideology" here refers to self-placement on a seven-point scale from very liberal to very conservative.

Perot. A negative score would indicate greater agreement with the Democrats.

As a predictor of Perot activism, this variable is significant only for Democrats (data not shown). This is interesting, since the effect is significant even when controlling for strength of partisanship. Democrats rather than Republicans reacted to what they saw as a gap between their own and the party's ideology by engaging in Perot activism. In other words, Democrats who felt the Democratic party was too liberal were more likely to support Perot; this does not hold true for Republicans who found the Republican party too conservative. As a measure of alienation then, ideological consistency with party does not explain why Republicans would be more likely than Democrats to defect to Perot.

Candidate Ideology

Given the current focus of campaigns on candidates as opposed to parties it is appropriate to look for ideological effects from evaluations of the ideology of candidates. Using a spatial model, I compared the distance between respondent ideology and that of the respondent's party nominee with the distance to Perot; for independents the distances compared were between Perot and the closest major party candidate. As with the perceived distance to party ideology, an effect is found among Democrats, even when controlling for strength of partisanship (data not shown). Again, while this is an interesting difference between Democrats and Republicans, the effect does not explain why Republicans showed more Perot activity than Democrats. While Democrats show higher Perot activity the further away they saw themselves from Clinton's ideology, relative to their distance from Perot Republicans do not show higher Perot activity correlating with distance from Bush's ideology.

TABLE 2

Effect of alienation from government on Perot activism

	<u>Democrats</u>		<u>Independents</u>		<u>Republicans</u>	
	B	t-ratio	B	t-ratio	B	t-ratio
trust gov't	-.263037	-2.222	-.581616	-2.596	-.088940	-.812
eval. of Congress	-.158191	-1.736	-.374464	-1.990	-.220058	-1.540
eval. of Sup. Court	.023525	.292	-.227363	-1.823	.068690	.946
N	304		163		352	
Adj. R2	.03043		.05410		.00908	

Source: Perot sample data

Alienation from Government

Much coverage portrayed the Perot movement as a populist uprising to, in the words of Perot himself, "take government back for the people." It is therefore plausible to think that a source of motivation for Perot activism may have been general voter anger and frustration. We might expect this to be the case particularly among independents, since they have no group tie to policymakers.

The general alienation present in the sample is straightforward: 40.6% of the entire sample reported that they could "almost never" trust the government in Washington to do what is right. On another traditional measure of alienation, the percentage of respondents answering that the government is run for all the people or for a few big interests looking out for themselves, 96.9% of the entire sample responded that the government is run for a few big interests. Such unanimity makes this variable unusable in a regression equation, since it shows no variance, although it is a clear indicator of alienation within the sample. (By comparison, 78.7% of the national electorate as measured by the 1992 NES said that government was run by and for a few big interests.)

In order to evaluate respondents' affect toward government generally, I looked at two other variables: the respondents' overall evaluation of Congress and their overall evaluation of the Supreme Court. These measures allow us to see if respondents' anger at government waxes diffuse or focused on a particular branch.

These three variables yield an interesting picture of the differences in general government-targeted alienation among the party groupings. Democrats show significant effects of trust in government and evaluation of Congress on Perot activism. This makes sense because Congress was generally perceived as a Democratic institution; those

Democrats who held it in low esteem would feel alienated, and would be consequently more likely to defect from their party. Independents show a significant effect only for trust in government, and the effect is dramatic ($B = -.58$). This would suggest that the alienation of Independents was more diffuse, and not targeted at specific actors in the government. Finally, none of the three variables taken together is significant among Republicans; the strongest one is evaluation of Congress. Overall, the entire sample of potential Perot activists was alienated from government, but this anger was not very focused, and does not explain why Republicans' Perot activity was higher than that of Democrats.

Issues

One of Rosenstone's predictors of third-party vote is the salience of an issue neglected by the major parties. As the importance of a neglected issue increases, the potential electoral windfall for a party willing to address the issue also increases. Many published reports gave credit to Perot for focusing public attention on the deficit during the 1992 campaign through his use of half-hour "infomercials" (Lichter and Noyes, 156). The extent to which different issues were important to members of different parties may offer some insight into the nature of party alienation and Perot's appeal for these groups.

In order to test which issues were most important to the different party groupings in the Perot sample, Table 3 summarizes respondents' answers to this question.

Among Democrats, the most frequent answer was national health insurance; of those identifying an issue as "most important," 32.5% gave this response. The next three most frequent responses are a balanced budget amendment (13.8%), restricting imports (13.2%), and a constitutional amendment banning abortion (12.4%). All other issues were much less

TABLE 3

Percent Identifying an Issue as "most important"*

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
nat'l health insurance	32.7%	21.2%	14.8%
<i>balanced budget</i>	13.4	17.5	27.9
<i>import limits</i>	13.8	9.5	7.4
abortion ban	12.3	10.9	10.8
<i>term limits</i>	8.9	15.3	22.6
pollution controls	8.2	6.6	3.7
<i>decr. foreign involvement</i>	5.9	8.0	5.7
<i>Social Security taxes</i>	3.0	4.4	2.7
<i>increased gas taxes</i>	1.5	2.2	2.7
affirmative action	.4	4.4	1.7
<i>Total for Perot issues</i>	46.5%	56.9%	69.0%
Sample N	269	137	297

*Responses from pre-election wave

Source: Perot sample data

prominent (the next is term limits, with 8.7%).⁴

Much less consensus on a single issue is seen among Independents; the most frequent answer is again national health insurance, but with only 21.8%. Next is a balanced budget amendment, with 17.5%, then term limits with 16%, and limiting imports, 12.6%. Abortion is next, with 8.3%.

For Republicans, the most frequent answer was a balanced budget amendment (21.5%), followed by term limits (17.7%), national health insurance (16.9%), abortion (9.4%), and restricting imports (6.6%). Broadly speaking, national health insurance was a more prominent issue among Democrats than among Republicans or independents; also interestingly, term limits was chosen as the most important issue most frequently by Republicans.

For further comparison, we can compare these responses to responses of subjects in the Party Activist sample. The sample of Caucus attenders shows much more unity on which issues they consider "most important." Among Democrats, three issues account for 64% of those identifying an issue as most important; national health insurance with 39.9%, abortion with 15.1%, and a balanced budget amendment with 9.1%. Limits on imports, so prominent among Democrats in the Perot sample, was named most important by only 5.8% of Caucus attenders. Republican caucus attenders named a balanced budget amendment as the most

⁴It is important to note the nature of these results. They indicate a pattern of opinion on the salience of certain issues in relation to other specific issues, and do not predict activism for any given candidate because they do not indicate which candidate the respondent feels would do the best job on that issue. To a great extent, though, campaigns direct their energies toward bringing to the fore those issues which they expect will yield them electoral advantage. In this case, the Clinton campaign's emphasis on health care seems to have landed on fertile ground.

important issue in 30.4% of the cases, with abortion almost equally strong at 28.8%. The next closest issue among Republican caucus attenders was national health insurance, with 7.9%. Term limits and the restricting of imports rated only 6.6% and 1.1% respectively.

Of the issues asked about, four were particularly important in the Perot campaign: a balanced budget, import limits, decreased foreign involvement, and term limits. Of those naming an issue as “most important,” 69% of Republicans named a Perot issue, compared with 56.9% of Independents and 46.5% of Democrats. Indeed, the two strongest issues among Republicans, a balanced budget and term limits, account for 50.5% of all the “most important issue” responses among Republicans; Perot emphasized both of these issues.

These results indicate that a greater proportion of potential Perot activists than traditional Democratic and Republican activists were concerned about congressional term limits and restrictions on imports, and that a smaller proportion were concerned about abortion. They also suggest that Perot drew more support among Republicans than among Democrats because he focused on the issues they found important, emphasizing, for instance, a balanced budget rather than abortion. By itself, however, the prominence of Perot issues among Republicans in the sample does not demonstrate agreement with Perot on these issues, only consensus that these issues were important. To evaluate whether activists agreed more with Perot’s issue positions than with those of the other candidates, we need to construct a spatial model. Here the hypothesis is that respondents evaluate their own issue positions relative to their perceptions of where the candidates stand on these issues, and choose to support the candidate whose positions most closely reflect their own. One of Rosenstone’s findings was that estrangement from the positions of the major party candidates only generates third party voting when the distance between the voter and the closest major

TABLE 4

Regression coefficients for perceived distance on issues from respondent to party and Perot as a predictor of Perot activism

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
nat'l health insurance	.213329**	.344993	-.037161
import limits	-.017606	-.194335	.200712**
affirmative action	.070427	-.215981	-.114762
gas tax	-.030080	.030888	.134470*
Adj. R ²	.03652	.00454	.02432
N	185	103	232

* $p=.10$

** $p>.05$

Source: Perot sample data

party candidate is considerable (Rosenstone et al. 1984, 163). Analyzing the impact of issues in this way can confirm or disconfirm the above finding of the impact of issues on Perot activism for Republicans.

Issues: Distance to Party

Unlike candidates, political parties rarely take a group of specific issue positions, although they do try to associate themselves with particular causes (such as anti-tax) and sometimes programs (such as Social Security).⁵ Were there issues in the 1992 campaign which respondents associated clearly with the parties and, finding themselves sufficiently in disagreement on these issues, reacted by supporting Perot? For four issues, affirmative action programs, limiting imports to protect American jobs, government-sponsored national health insurance, and a significant increase in federal gasoline taxes, respondents were asked to evaluate the position of Bush, Clinton, and Perot, as well as the Democratic and Republican parties. Of these issues, Democrats most clearly advocated national health insurance, and Republicans were most committed to free trade, while Perot was the most protectionist. Perot also advocated higher gasoline taxes, in contrast to the generally anti-tax stance of Republicans.

Among Democrats, national health insurance is the only significant issue of these four in predicting Perot activism.⁶ This observed significance reflects disagreement with the

⁵The principal exception is the party platform, written in late summer (after the “A” wave of the survey) and quickly forgotten as a guide to policy.

⁶The attitudinal measures were taken in the “A” wave, while the activity variable is a count of activities performed for the Perot/Stockdale campaign during the general election. Attitudes at Time₁ are therefore said to be predicting behavior at Time₂.

Democratic party's relative support of national health insurance; Democrats who opposed such a program were more likely to work for Perot. For Republicans, the two issues of import limits and increased gas taxes are significant. The greater the distance between Republican respondents and their party on these issues relative to Perot (the more they favored import limits and increased gas taxes), the more Perot activity they performed.

To summarize the effect of ideology and issues at the individual level, Democrats defected from their party and supported Perot because they saw themselves as more conservative than Clinton or the Democratic party, and because they disagreed with the Democratic party's approach to health care reform. Republicans, on the other hand, do not show higher Perot activity based on ideology, and their relative closeness to Perot on issues, specifically import restrictions and increased gas taxes, significantly affected their Perot involvement. Perot passively attracted Democrats who disagreed with the Democratic approach to health care reform, even though this issue was not a focus of his campaign. On the Republican side, Perot attracted Republicans who disagreed with Republican trade policy, and Perot as a candidate actively cultivated this disagreement, drawing clear lines between himself on the one hand and Bush and the Republican party on the other, by vigorously attacking the proposed North American Free Trade Agreement.

Aggregate Level Impact of Issues

We can now turn to the aggregate level to ask: do the issue effects for individuals observed above help explain why Republicans were more active for Perot than Democrats? In order to measure the aggregate level effect, I first regressed respondent issue positions for the four issues on Perot activity for each party grouping, controlling for overall trust in

TABLE 5

Effect of Issues on Perot Activism, Controlling for Alienation

<u>Democrats</u>				
	B	t-ratio	mean	effect
trust in gov't	-0.445	-3.05	-1.22	0.54
eval. of Congress	0.025	.245	-1.01	-0.03
import limits	-0.126	-2.96	-0.67	0.08
nat'l health insurance	0.176	3.07	-1.96	-0.34
gas taxes	-0.049	-1.20	-0.14	0.01
affirmative action	0.050	1.12	-0.32	-0.02
Net effect of issues				-0.27
Constant		0.655416		
N		180		
Adj. R ²		0.10596		
<u>Independents</u>				
	B	t-ratio	mean	effect
trust in gov't	-0.093	-0.341	-1.54	0.14
eval. of Congress	-0.097	-0.402	-1.63	0.16
import limits	-0.127	-1.600	-0.93	0.12
nat'l health insurance	0.074	0.927	-1.52	-0.11
gas taxes	-0.011	-0.152	-0.16	0.00
affirmative action	0.060	0.671	1.06	0.06
Net effect of issues				0.07
Constant		1.444104		
N		96		
Adj. R ²		-0.008		
<u>Republicans</u>				
	B	t-ratio	mean	effect
trust in gov't	-0.209	-1.496	-1.27	0.27
eval. of Congress	-0.264	-1.467	-1.73	0.46
import limits	-0.122	-2.704	-0.12	0.02
nat'l health insurance	-0.027	-0.624	0.10	0.00
gas taxes	-0.108	-2.503	0.72	-0.08
affirmative action	0.103	1.843	1.43	0.15
Net effect of issues				0.08
Constant		0.543942		
N		216		
Adj. R ²		0.05875		

Source: Perot sample data

TABLE 6

Net Effect of Issues on Perot Activism

<u>Democrats</u>				
	B	t-ratio	mean	effect
import limits	-0.117	-2.74	-0.69	0.08
nat'l health ins.	0.166	2.90	-1.97	-0.33
incr. gas taxes	-0.041	-1.02	-0.16	0.01
affirmative action	0.042	0.96	-0.31	-0.01
Net effect				-0.25
Constant		1.15		
N		186		
Adj. R ²		0.061		
<u>Independents</u>				
	B	t-ratio	mean	effect
import limits	-0.110	-1.429	-0.99	0.11
nat'l health ins.	0.069	0.891	-1.52	-0.10
incr. gas taxes	0.015	0.214	0.11	0.00
affirmative action	0.058	0.708	1.07	0.06
Net effect				0.07
Constant		1.73		
N		102		
Adj. R ²		0.001		
<u>Republicans</u>				
	B	t-ratio	mean	effect
import limits	-0.117	-2.724	-0.15	0.02
nat'l health ins.	-0.018	-0.445	0.11	0.00
incr. gas taxes	-0.098	-2.404	0.64	-0.06
affirmative action	0.108	1.965	1.49	0.16
Net effect				0.11
Constant		1.22		
N		223		
Adj. R ²		0.046		

Source; Perot sample data

government and overall evaluation of Congress; these control variables were added in order to separate the issue effects from the effect of alienation. I used the respondents own positions, rather than their placement of the candidates, to avoid the selective perception of the positions of candidates whom they supported or opposed.

The regression coefficient represents the number and direction of units moved in Perot activity for each one point increase in the independent variable (such as position on import limits). The mean value for the issue position represents the difference between the group's position and neutrality. Thus, by multiplying the mean issue position by the regression coefficient, we determine the net impact of the group's issue position on the group's activity. Results are shown in Table 5. The sum of the issue effects shows that issue positions were a net positive for Perot support among Republicans and Independents, and a net negative for Perot support among Democrats. In order to focus more specifically on the issue effects, Table 6 shows the results of the same analysis without the trust in government and evaluation of Congress variables.

The structure of the issues in Perot support is worth noting. We might assume that the Perot campaign attracted support from partisans by staking out centrist positions, for example by drawing Democrats who were opposed to an issue and Republicans who favored it, in which case the sign of the regression coefficient would be positive for Democrats and negative for Republicans. The signs of the coefficients show that this was clearly not the case with the issues of import limits, gas taxes, and affirmative action. Rather than attracting Democrats with conservative views and Republicans with liberal views, for both parties the more respondents favored import restrictions, the more they did for Perot's campaign. Likewise for both parties, the more respondents favored increased gas taxes and opposed

affirmative action, the more activity they performed for Perot.

The bulk of the net positive effect for issue positions among Republicans is attributable to the issue of affirmative action. The more Republicans opposed affirmative action, the more they did for Perot, and the mean Republican position was firm opposition. The net effect for all issues is an increase in Perot activity of .11 units on a scale of zero to 6.

On the Democratic side the net negative effect on Perot activity derives from the issue of national health insurance. Although Democrats performed more Perot activity the more they opposed national health insurance, the mean Democratic position was strong support, producing a strong negative overall effect on Perot activity among Democrats. The net effect for all issues is -.25 units of activity.

Independents show interesting issue effects. While their support for import limits increased their Perot activity, their support for national health insurance decreased it by about the same amount, yielding a very small net positive effect for all issues. Their predisposition to Perot activity apart from issues, as measured by the intercept term, is the highest of the three groups.

To summarize, issues do help to explain why Republicans were more active for Perot than Democrats, because the issue positions of Republican respondents added to their Perot activity, while the positions of Democrats subtracted from their Perot activity.

Economic Performance

Among the arguments advanced by Anthony Downs in *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957) is that voters react to particularly good or bad economic times by punishing or rewarding incumbents based on fluctuations in mean per capita income, in the

process deviating from party loyalties. This idea was developed by Kramer, who found effects of fluctuations in real personal income in election voting for the House of Representatives (1971). More recent work has found that individuals do not hold government generally accountable for difficulties with personal finances (Brody and Sniderman, 1977) but only for broader economic effects (Kiewet, 1981). Rosenstone et al. found general economic adversity to contribute to the likelihood of a third party vote, both in terms of personal finances and for perceptions of the economy as a whole (Rosenstone et al., 1984). In contrast, Craig (1993) points to a body of work which undermines the idea that citizens vote their pocketbooks, but that they do hold government accountable for general economic downturns.

In the command center for the 1992 Clinton campaign, strategist James Carville posted a list of the themes for the day. Some themes would be replaced by others, only to reappear later, but the number one spot always read, "It's the Economy, Stupid." Clearly the national economy, still in recession in 1992, was seen as the Bush administration's biggest electoral weakness, and reporting after the election proclaimed that "Anger at the Economy Was the Glue Binding Supporters to Perot" (Dionne, 1992). Assuming this is correct in the case of voters, how did the economy affect activists for Perot? Do the effects vary by party, and if so, does this effect help explain why Republicans were more active than Democrats? Given that Democrats who were dissatisfied with the economy could support Clinton, and given that Independents were the most predisposed to support Perot, we might expect to find an effect for evaluations of the economy only among Republicans. In addition, Republicans should be most likely to evaluate the economy positively under a Republican administration, so those Republicans who reject Bush based on the economy should show higher Perot

TABLE 7

Regression coefficients for evaluations of the economy on Perot activism

	Democrats		Independents		Republicans	
	B	t-ratio	B	t-ratio	B	t-ratio
nat'l economy past 12 mo.	.1191	1.22	.0389	.228	-.280744	.0001
nat'l economy next 12 mo.	-.1225	-1.60	-.1752	-1.37	-.108213	.0782
Adj R ²	.004		.001		.089	
N	273		153		332	
Source: Perot sample data						

activity. Table 6 shows this to be the case.

Respondents were asked to rate how well they thought the nation's economy had been doing over the previous 12 months and how well they thought it would do over the next 12 months. The only respondents for whom evaluations of the national economy are significant are Republicans, who showed more Perot activity the lower they rated the economy. The effect of the retrospective evaluation is more than twice as strong as the outlook for the future. This suggests that only Republicans may have used an incumbent performance rule on the economy in guiding their choices for activism. The strong effect indicates that negative evaluations of the economy did much to overcome Republican party loyalty.

Because this was a three-way election, the second step of an incumbent performance rule is to evaluate the candidates based on their ability to manage the economy. Such an analysis will potentially show both push and pull effects based on negative and positive evaluations of the candidates' abilities on this dimension. A look at the evidence indicates that perceptions of how well Perot would deal with economic problems is a powerful predictor of Perot activism for all party groupings, but particularly among Republicans.

These results show both push and pull effects; Democrats who thought Clinton would handle the economy poorly and Perot would do well were likely to work for Perot. Independents show push effects from both major party candidates; the reason that attraction to Perot on this dimension is not significant is that independents rated Perot so positively that there is little variance (note that the coefficient is larger than for the two significant ones). At the same time, the overall effect on activism is as strong as that of the negative evaluations of Bush, and stronger than those of Democrats. Republicans show strong push effects away from Bush, but even stronger pull effects toward Perot.

TABLE 8

Effect on Perot activism of evaluations of ability to handle economic problems

	<u>Democrats</u>		<u>Independents</u>		<u>Republicans</u>	
	B	t-ratio	B	t-ratio	B	t-ratio
Bush	0.073893	0.582	0.16707	0.946	0.332785	4.351
Clinton	0.355634	4.006	0.298764	2.59	0.233054	2.759
Perot	-0.389668	-4.706	-0.497682	-3.238	-0.522614	-5.577
N	240		139		290	
Adj. R ²	0.11585		0.07699		0.14877	

Source: Perot sample data

In sum, Republicans were motivated to Perot activism by concern over the national economy more than any other group, were pushed away from their party by Bush's handling of the economy, and were attracted to what they saw as Perot's ability to handle the economy. Given the prominence of the economy in the campaign, this is an important difference between Democrats and Republicans. The combined implication of Republicans' negative views of the economy, combined with their negative evaluations of Bush's ability to steer it back onto a growth path, is that perceptions of the economy did much to boost Perot's support among Republicans.

Impact of the Economy Relative to That of Issues

Having established that both issues and the economy account for some of the difference in Perot activity between Republicans and Democrats, we can combine these variables into one analysis to determine which had the greater effect. If economic concerns dominate over issue positions, this would be good news for the Republican party, because it would suggest that Republicans who supported Perot would be likely to return to the party if economic circumstances were better. On the other hand, if issues have a greater effect than the economy, this would suggest that this group of Republicans are open to future appeals based on issues from outside the party, regardless of economic conditions.

Table 9 shows that the effects vary by party. For Democrats, issues were more important than perceptions of the economy in shaping Perot activism, and the effect is negative. Independents shared the concerns of Democrats over health care, since the effect of issues is negative for them as well, while the economy is positive, but not strikingly so.

Republicans show that not only were issues a net positive for Perot, but the economy

was as well, and to a much greater extent. The net effect for the two economic variables is .27, while the net effect for issues is .10. Particularly striking is the size of the retrospective evaluation; Republicans were particularly disappointed by the economy's performance over the previous twelve months.

TABLE 9

Effect of Issues on Activism, Controlling for National Economy

<u>Democrats</u>				
	B	t-ratio	mean	effect
nat'l economy past year	-0.2218	-1.94	1.382	-0.31
nat'l economy next year	0.1681	1.934	0.588	0.10
affirmative action	0.0016	0.037	-0.224	0.00
balanced budget	-0.0258	-0.645	3.036	-0.08
import limits	-0.1338	-3.128	-0.564	0.08
nat'l health insurance	0.1838	3.241	-1.988	-0.37
Constant		1.492		
N		165		
Adjusted R ²		0.108		
Net effect for issues				-0.37
<u>Independents</u>				
	B	t-ratio	mean	effect
nat'l economy past year	0.0360	0.161	1.245	0.04
nat'l economy next year	0.0816	0.492	0.67	0.05
affirmative action	0.0670	0.756	1.032	0.07
balanced budget	-0.0835	-0.9	2.032	-0.17
import limits	-0.0819	-0.921	-1.000	0.08
nat'l health insurance	0.0931	1.04	-1.564	-0.15
Constant		1.852		
N		94		
Adjusted R ²		-0.013		
Net effect for issues				-0.16
<u>Republicans</u>				
	B	t-ratio	mean	effect
nat'l economy past year	0.3289	3.019	0.784	0.26
nat'l economy next year	0.1208	1.341	0.05	0.01
affirmative action	0.1037	1.979	1.486	0.15
balanced budget	-0.0362	-0.67	1.959	-0.07
import limits	-0.0551	-1.249	-0.203	0.01
nat'l health insurance	0.0126	0.297	0.104	0.00
Constant		1.014		
N		222		
Adjusted R ²		0.0861		
Net effect for issues				0.10

Source: Perot sample data

SECTION V: CONCLUSIONS

Republicans were more active for Perot than Democrats in part because they agreed more with Perot than with the Republican party or its nominee on the issue of import limits, and agreed more with Perot than the Republican party on the need for increased gas taxes. More significantly, Republicans thought that Bush had mishandled the economy and that Perot would do a better job.

There exists a group of Republican activists susceptible to appeals for limiting trade and increasing at least one type of tax. Whether these issues are pursued by Perot, another independent candidate, a Republican, or a Democrat, they represent a potential fault line within a party trying to reclaim the White House. The good news is that economic conditions and candidates change with time; Bush and the recession for which some Republicans blamed him are in the past, and the next campaign will be fought on different ground.

The Perot campaign was an attack on the status quo, which included a Republican president. Democrats who agreed with Perot's points could abide by their party identification and support Clinton; some who thought he was too liberal, or who disagreed with the party on certain issues, such as national health insurance, supported Perot, particularly those who thought Perot would be better at handling the economy, but the broad majority of Democrats supported national health insurance, and supported their party's nominee.

Independents were most likely to support Perot in the first place, rather than the candidates of the major parties, in keeping with their Independent status. In addition, they

were the most alienated from government. Their positions on issues did not significantly affect their Perot activity.

Republicans defected to Perot not because they felt an ideological gap between themselves and their party or its nominee. Some Republican Perot supporters were pulled toward Perot's stance on import limits and gasoline taxes, and pushed away from the Republican party's support of NAFTA. Overall, they were very concerned about the economy, and were not confident in Bush's ability to handle economic problems. Those who were most opposed to affirmative action, perhaps choosing between Perot and Clinton, supported Perot because they saw him as more conservative on this issue.

The above analysis holds both good news and bad news for the Republican party. The good news is that the anger Republicans felt toward the economy and President Bush will rapidly dissipate in future campaigns as economic conditions change and Bush retires. In addition, affirmative action is an easy issue on which Republicans can recover activists by "leaning right," although this is probably not necessary. The bad news is that the 1992 debate over protectionism versus free trade exposed a rift in the Republican party. To the extent that this issue, and to a lesser extent the issue of higher gasoline taxes, plays a role in future campaigns, Republican Perot activists have already demonstrated a willingness to work against the Republican party in favor of a candidate who shares their views.

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